

As we all know, the weakest and most vulnerable are dying, and many, many more are at risk of death while millions more are made susceptible to opportunistic diseases while many children continue to suffer from stunting. Many, however, are rallying to mitigate this suffering.

As my good friend and colleague from Minnesota pointed out, many of the organizations that have done so much for so long are doing even more now to make sure that we get to the point where people are food secure. And, of course, that includes the secular groups and the faith-based groups all working in tandem for this noble goal.

One of the objectives of the Global Food Security Act was to take a whole-of-government approach, led by USAID, in promoting food security. In conducting oversight hearings with regard to its implementation, however, we found that there were several places where a whole-of-agency approach, let alone a whole-of-government approach was lacking.

One area that needed attention was to make sure that our nutrition efforts were firing on all cylinders. While the original bill, law, and subsequent reauthorization placed great emphasis on reducing stunting—and I have seen it all over Africa, as have Betty and many others. You go to Nigeria, and stunting is endemic to this moment. That can all be alleviated through the right kind of nutritional interventions, including the first 1,000 days of life, from conception to the second birthday, with nutrition that helps both mother and baby.

We have seen pictures of children with distended bellies caused by worms that rob them of needed nutrients. I chaired several hearings on worms, horrible things to see, growing in little kids, causing them to die, but certainly to be very sick in most cases.

USAID, when it came to deworming, often had a more stovepiped approach to it, while this legislation integrates the whole idea of deworming with the food security so that we don't feed the worms, we feed the future, and we feed these wonderful children and all those who are at risk.

We also have put in and continue the integration of water, sanitation, and hygiene, or WASH programming, which is also extraordinarily effective.

This is a great bill. I hope it gets total support of this body. Again, I thank Betty. I look forward to this vote and enactment into law.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for participating in the Congressional Children's Caucus hearing this past Monday on the Uvalde murder of children.

I rise to join my colleagues in supporting the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act of 2022 and compliment Representative MCCOLLUM and

others who have strongly supported this legislation over the years.

It is particularly timely because I have just finished meeting with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and was able to visit in Pakistan in early September after the catastrophic and momentous floods of biblical proportion that went on.

What we saw was the potential of extreme starvation of families and children. Thirty-three million people were displaced. The families in the region had lost their wheat, their cotton, and their livestock.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentlewoman.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, the idea of the emphasis on the issue of food security is so crucial, both in terms of the climate change such that is impacted in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and the issues of catastrophic flood conditions, so I rise to support this with the idea that we have right in our midst conditions that would suggest food insecurity.

This legislation that focuses on ensuring that people of the world can eat, and the children of the world will not starve is a crucial and needed legislation, which I support, and which emphasizes, again, the important element in foreign affairs of food. Food helps save the world.

I support this legislation, and I commend my colleagues to continue to work, with devastating conditions around the world, to ensure the safety and security of children and particularly food security.

Mrs. KIM of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support this bipartisan bill to refine and extend statutory authorities needed to respond to the global food crisis and prevent future aid dependency. It updates the policy, definitions, and the strategy requirements of the current law. It also strengthens oversight and accountability and ensures continued focus on core programs that have strong bipartisan support.

At its core, the bill embodies the saying, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

These are effective, strategic investments in agriculture and agricultural development to help ensure that communities and families are able to provide for themselves.

Madam Speaker, I urge support for this bill, and I hope that our Senate colleagues will take it up promptly.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2140

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Madam Speaker, as the world continues to experience climate-related devastation, downstream effects of COVID-19 on global supply chains, and the crippling effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on food delivery and production, the United States must continue to support those vulnerable to food insecurity.

Now is not the time to continue business as usual. The United States must step up to meet the moment and adapt our policy tools and foreign assistance to do the same. H.R. 8446 ensures that the United States maintains global leadership in combating the global hunger crisis by sowing the seeds of food security for the future.

Madam Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this important piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8446, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CLYDE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION ELIGIBILITY EXPANSION ACT

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8463) to modify the requirements under the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 for candidate countries, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8463

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Millennium Challenge Corporation Eligibility Expansion Act".

SEC. 2. MODIFICATIONS OF REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A CANDIDATE COUNTRY.

Section 606 of the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 7705) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 606. CANDIDATE COUNTRIES.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—A country shall be a candidate country for purposes of eligibility for receiving assistance under section 605 if—

"(1) the per capita income of the country is equal to or less than the gross national income per capita of the 125th poorest country as identified by the World Bank for the fiscal year; and

"(2) subject to subsection (b), the country is not ineligible to receive United States economic assistance under part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 by reason of the application of any provision of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 or any other provision of law.

“(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—For the purposes of determining whether a country is eligible for receiving assistance under section 605 pursuant to subsection (a)(2), the exercise by the President, the Secretary of State, or any other officer or employee of the United States of any waiver or suspension of any provision of law referred to in such paragraph, and notification to the appropriate congressional committees in accordance with such provision of law, shall be construed as satisfying the requirements of such subsection.

“(c) IDENTIFICATION BY THE BOARD.—The Board shall identify whether a country is a candidate country for purposes of this section.”.

SEC. 3. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) AMENDMENT TO MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE COMPACT AUTHORITY.—Section 609(b)(2) of the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 7708(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) by striking the heading and inserting “COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS”; and

(2) by striking “with respect to a lower middle income country described in section 606(b),”.

(b) AMENDMENT TO REPORT IDENTIFYING CANDIDATE COUNTRIES.—Section 608(a)(1) of the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 7707(a)(1)) is amended by striking “section 606(a)(1)(B)” and inserting “section 606(a)(2)”.

(c) AMENDMENT TO AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR CANDIDATE COUNTRIES.—Section 616(b)(1) of the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 7715(b)(1)) is amended by striking “subsection (a) or (b) of section 606” and inserting “section 606(a)”.

SEC. 4. MODIFICATION TO FACTORS IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY.

Section 607(c)(2) of the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 7706(c)(2)) is amended in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) by striking “consider” and inserting “prioritize need and impact by considering”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) and the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 8463.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am glad to bring this bipartisan legislation, which I authored together with my colleague, Representative YOUNG KIM of California to the House floor.

It will allow the Millennium Challenge Corporation, or MCC, to continue to work where it can do the most to foster development and reduce poverty.

When Congress established the MCC almost 20 years ago, it was envisioned as a selective agency that would work collaboratively with the best-governed developing countries.

Perhaps the most visible part of MCC's rigorous selection process is its scorecard, which evaluates more than 20 different policy indicators of good governance. But Congress also set an income-based threshold for nations where MCC could work. It was intended to make sure MCC focused on developing countries and on helping the people who need it most. I strongly support that focus and nothing in this bill is intended to alter that core part of MCC's mission and mandate.

But the way we define that threshold, based on who falls within two categories in the World Bank's estimates of per capita gross national income, has led to several issues this legislation seeks to address.

In the decades since the original standard was defined, the number of potential countries eligible for MCC's compacts has shrunk by almost a third. These compacts, which need to be ratified by both the United States and the partner country, can take years to negotiate, ratify, and implement.

Under the income threshold's current structure, countries can suddenly become ineligible for assistance in the middle of a multi-year negotiation. Global disruptions like a pandemic or major conflict can also lead to changes in a country's eligibility.

Under my legislation, the MCC would continue to use World Bank measures of GNI per capita as the basis to calculate eligibility, while expanding consideration for potential compacts to the world's 125 poorest countries. This change will ensure that MCC has a stable number of potential candidates, even as we continue to make progress in the fight against global poverty.

The new pool of potentially eligible countries would cover 98 percent of the world's poor and 90 percent of the countries MCC has identified as facing substantial vulnerability, including to pandemics, natural disasters, migration, and food insecurity.

It is important to note that this is potential eligibility.

This bill does not change any of MCC's scorecard criteria. To qualify for a potential compact, countries must also be generally eligible to receive American foreign assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act and other provisions of United States law.

The MCC Eligibility Expansion Act also includes protections to ensure that newly eligible countries do not crowd out support for low and lower-middle-income countries that qualify under the existing income threshold.

For example, it includes language that would strengthen statutory direction to the MCC's board to prioritize development need and impact. The legislation would also require all potential candidate countries to identify appropriate national contributions during compact negotiations, meaning wealthier countries would pitch in more.

In implementing this legislation, I also expect the MCC to compare this

small pool of newly eligible upper-middle-income countries against their peers in determining eligibility through the scorecard.

This bill would provide the MCC with more certainty and stability when it chooses to pursue a compact.

Madam Speaker, with the support of my colleagues today, we can ensure that the MCC will continue its important work and maximize its impact fighting poverty and promoting development.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIM of California. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I was proud to introduce the Millennium Challenge Corporation Eligibility Expansion Act along with my Democratic colleague from Texas, Mr. CASTRO.

In the nearly 20 years since its founding under President Bush, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has demonstrated a strong track record of success in its mission of combating poverty through economic growth.

The agency has enjoyed broad bipartisan support, earned through strict project selection criteria and the ability to hold partner countries to a high standard of accountability. But the agency and its partners are facing new challenges. The Chinese Communist Party is increasing its malign influence in the developing world, often disguised as development assistance. The world is facing a food security crisis and other effects of Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine.

Many countries risk losing progress on development and poverty reduction made over previous decades. This bill will ensure that the world's 125 poorest countries are eligible for potential consideration as candidate countries in the MCC's rigorous selection process. It adds stability to MCC's partnerships, and it ensures its ability to focus on the world's poorest populations, who are often the most vulnerable to debt traps and other forms of outside manipulation.

This bill is an important step towards equipping MCC to operate in today's environment so, that it can continue to use its proven, evidence-based model to build sustainable economic growth, transparency, and stability in partner countries around the world.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIM of California. Madam Speaker, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has done important work on behalf of the American people to promote economic growth and transparency around the world. But we must make sure that the agency is equipped to address the challenges and threats of today, including those posed by our strategic rivals who are attempting to increase their global influence.

Madam Speaker, I, again, thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO), my colleague, our bipartisan cosponsors, and Chairman MEKES and Ranking Member MCCAUL of the Committee on Foreign Affairs for moving this bill forward.

Madam Speaker, I urge support for the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2150

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Madam Speaker, the Millennium Challenge Corporation Eligibility Expansion Act will improve the MCC's ability to form stable, long-term compacts in the well-governed countries that will benefit most from United States' development assistance.

I thank my colleagues, particularly my co-lead on this bill, Representative YOUNG KIM, for the bipartisan work that has brought this legislation forward today.

Madam Speaker, I urge the House to pass this legislation. I hope the Senate will take it up swiftly so that it can become law this year, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8463.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CLYDE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

COMBATING THE PERSECUTION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN CHINA ACT

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4821) to hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4821

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Combating the Persecution of Religious Groups in China Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) According to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom (IRF) report estimates, Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the country's total population, Christians, 5.1 percent, Muslims, 1.8 percent, fol-

lowers of folk religions, 21.9 percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons, 52.2 percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising less than one percent.

(2) The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) recognizes five official religions, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism (according to the State Department's IRF report) and only religious groups belonging to one of the five sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and hold worship service, excluding all other faiths and denying the ability to worship without being registered with the government.

(3) The activities of state-sanctioned religious organizations are regulated by the Chinese Communist Party, which manages all aspects of religious life.

(4) The Chinese Communist Party is actively seeking to control, govern, and manipulate all aspects of faith through the "Sinicization of Religion", a process intended to shape religious traditions and doctrines so they conform with the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.

(5) On February 1, 2018, the PRC Government implemented new religious regulations that imposed restrictions on Chinese contacts with overseas religious organizations, required government approval for religious schools, websites, and any online religious service, and effectively banned unauthorized religious gatherings and teachings.

(6) There are numerous reports that authorities forced closures of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country.

(7) Authorities arrested and detained religious leaders trying to hold services online.

(8) There are credible reports of Chinese authorities raiding house churches and other places of religious worship, removing and confiscating religious paraphernalia, installing surveillance cameras on religious property, pressuring congregations to sing songs of the Chinese Communist Party and display the national flag during worship, forcing churches to replace images of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary with pictures of General Secretary Xi Jinping, and banning children and students from attending religious services.

(9) It has been reported that the PRC is rewriting and will issue a version of the Bible with the "correct understanding" of the text according to the Chinese Communist Party. Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized publishing and copying businesses that handled religious materials.

(10) According to the Department of State's IRF reports, the PRC Government has imprisoned thousands of individuals of all faiths for practicing their religious beliefs and often labels them as "cults".

(11) The Political Prisoner Database maintained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Foundation counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for "organizing or using a 'cult' to undermine implementation of the law." Prisoners include—

(A) the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who has been held captive along with his parents since May 17, 1995;

(B) Pastor Zhang Shaojie, a Three-Self church pastor from Nanle County in central Henan was sentenced in July 2014 to 12 years in prison for "gathering a crowd to disrupt the public order";

(C) Pastor John Cao, a United States permanent resident from Greensboro, North Carolina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in March 2018 under contrived charges of organizing illegal border crossings; and

(D) Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church who was arrested and sentenced to 9 years in prison for "inciting to subvert state power" and "illegal business operations".

(12) Authorities continue to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh and inhumane treatment.

(13) Since 1999, the Department of State has designated the PRC as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

(14) The National Security Strategy of the United States, issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002, 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States to promoting international religious freedom to advance the security, economic, and other national interests of the United States.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

(a) HOLDING PRC OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ABUSES TARGETING CHINESE CHRISTIANS OR OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.—It is the policy of the United States to consider senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) who are responsible for or have directly carried out, at any time, persecution of Christians or other religious minorities in the PRC to have committed—

(1) a gross violation of internationally recognized human rights for purposes of imposing sanctions with respect to such officials under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

(2) a particularly severe violation of religious freedom for purposes of applying section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such officials.

(b) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.—The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom should support efforts to protect and promote international religious freedom in the PRC and for programs to protect Christians and other religious minorities in the PRC.

(c) DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN.—It is the policy of the United States to continue to designate the PRC as a "country of particular concern", as long as the PRC continues to engage in systematic and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292).

SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the United States should promote religious freedom in the PRC by—

(1) strengthening religious freedom diplomacy on behalf of Christians and other religious minorities facing restrictions in the PRC;

(2) raising cases relating to religious or political prisoners at the highest levels with PRC officials because experience demonstrates that consistently raising prisoner cases can result in improved treatment, reduced sentences, or in some cases, release from custody, detention, or imprisonment;

(3) encouraging Members of Congress to "adopt" a prisoner of conscience in the PRC through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's "Defending Freedom Project", raise the case with PRC officials, and work publicly for their release;

(4) calling on the PRC Government to unconditionally release religious and political prisoners or, at the very least, ensure that detainees are treated humanely with access to family, the lawyer of their choice, independent medical care, and the ability to practice their faith while in detention;